

THE RSPO AFRICA ROADSHOW

A CAPACITY BUILDING & AWARENESS RAISING PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE OIL PALM IN AFRICA

This briefing note is part of a series of briefing notes developed for the RSPO Africa Roadshow. Other briefing notes available are:

1. An Introduction to the RSPO
2. Sustainable Palm Oil Production: The RSPO Principles and Criteria
3. The RSPO Certification Process
4. High Conservation Values
5. Free Prior & Informed Consent

All these briefing notes are available in English and French at: www.proforestininitiative.org/roadshow

Visit the above website for more information about the RSPO Africa Roadshow and for contact details of partners in this programme.

THE RSPO CERTIFICATION PROCESS

About certification

The development and use of voluntary independent certification schemes has grown massively over the last few decades and is now used in almost every sector of global production from clothes and toys to chemicals and engineering. Its use in agricultural production, though relatively recent, is accelerating rapidly with schemes now available for almost every type of crop.

Certification schemes provide an independent guarantee that the production of a particular product has met the requirements of a standard. The standard can relate to a single issue such as safety or define sustainability as is the case with the RSPO Principles and Criteria (RSPO P&C). Certification schemes usually have three key components described below:

The certification standard: This sets out the requirements that must be met, and against which the certification assessments are made. An overview of the RSPO standard (RSPO P&C) is provided in *Briefing Note 2*.

The certification process requirements: These set out the rules for the independent organisation which undertakes certification (Certification Bodies), setting out the process for ensuring that the requirements in the standard have been met, and may include guidance on the certification team requirements, assessment processes, sampling intensities, control of claims, grievance resolution, etc.

Accreditation requirements: This sets out an approval mechanism for ensuring that the independent organisations that carry out the certification process are duly competent and able to produce credible, consistent results.

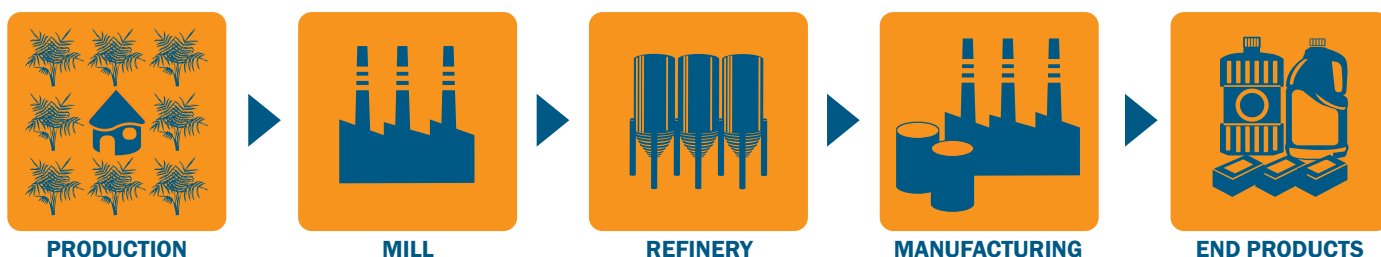
This briefing note provides a brief overview of the certification process requirements under the RSPO.

Who is certified?

The RSPO aims to promote the production and use of sustainably produced palm oil. To achieve this in practice requires two types of certification:

Production level certification: This applies to palm oil mills and their supply bases (both large estates and smallholders). Production level certification aims at ensuring that the adverse social and environmental impacts of growing and milling palm oil are minimised whilst the benefits are promoted. Requirements for sustainable mill and plantation operations are outlined in the RSPO P&C.

Supply chain certification: In order to promote the use of sustainably produced palm oil, it is necessary to have a way to link the palm oil in final products to sustainable management of plantations. This requires a mechanism for managing the movement of product through the supply chain from plantation to final use which can often be long and complex. This is done through supply chain or 'chain of custody' certification. Supply chain certification provides the mechanism for maintaining the integrity of certified products ensuring that they are not substituted, mixed with uncertified products in an uncontrolled way or double traded. This certification can be applied to every type of organisation—manufacturers, traders, processors, retailers etc—in the supply chain.



The certification process for growers and mills

PREPARATION

Growers/millers need to prepare for certification by reviewing and understanding the requirements of the standard (RSPO P&C) and ensuring that they are all being implemented.

A baseline or gap assessment can be very useful prior to the main assessment. This can be carried out by any organisation, not only an approved certification body. The gap assessment helps the grower/miller to identify areas where they are not yet meeting the standard and allows them to implement corrective measures before the main certification assessment.

FINDING A CERTIFICATION BODY

A grower or miller intending to undergo certification needs to contract an RSPO-approved certification body. Most organisations contact several certification bodies and receive a proposal from each and can then identify the certifier which best suits their needs. The RSPO keeps a list of approved certification bodies (<http://www.rspo.org/page/512>).

CERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The certification assessment involves the certification body visiting the operation to assess the level of compliance with all of the RSPO's principles and criteria. During the assessment, the certification body reviews relevant legal, operational and compliance documents available from the grower/miller, visits operational activities to check compliance with the RSPO standard and obtains inputs from relevant stakeholders including local communities.

ADDRESSING NON-CONFORMITIES

During the assessment, the certification body will assess conformity with each indicator. Non conformities must be graded as either major or minor. Where there is a major non-conformity it must be addressed before a certificate can be issued. Minor non-conformities do not preclude the issuance of an RSPO certificate. However all minor non-conformities are expected to be addressed by the next surveillance visit.

CERTIFICATION

Once any major non-conformities have been addressed, an RSPO certificate is issued with a validity of five years. A summary of the certification report is produced by the certification body and is publicly available. RSPO has a list of all certified operations (<http://www.rspo.org/certifiedlist>). Certified mills can make trading claims about producing **certified sustainable palm oil**.

SURVEILLANCE

An RSPO certificate issued is valid for a maximum period of five years but during the lifetime of the certificate, annual monitoring, known as surveillance visits, are conducted by the certification body. These ensure that the operation continues to conform with the RSPO standard, check that any minor non-conformities have been addressed and follow up on any complaints received. Any major non-conformity found during a surveillance visit must be rectified within 60 days or the certificate is revoked. Before the end of each five-year period a complete re-assessment of compliance must take place.

The certification unit: Under the RSPO, the unit of certification is the mill and covers both directly managed land and associated smallholders and outgrowers. It is required that at the time of certification, all directly managed land supplying fresh fruit bunches (FFB) to the mill are managed to certifiable standards. Additionally, there must be a plan in place to ensure that 100% of the associated smallholders and outgrowers are of a certifiable standard within three years.

Certification for large organisations and RSPO producer members: RSPO requires that all producer members certify their entire supply base. However, as some members are large producers with operations in many countries, they can do this in a stepwise fashion. Organisations with more than one management unit or having a controlling holding in two or more autonomous companies are permitted to certify individual management units if: a) they are members of the RSPO b) they have a time-bound plan for certifying all entities, at the time of their first certification and c) there are no significant land conflicts, no conversion of natural forests or HCVs since 2005, no labour disputes and no evidence of non-compliance with legal requirements. New acquisitions have to comply with these requirements within three years.

For further information: www.proforestinitiative.org/roadshow